

N

C

N

PREVENTING CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

A Case Study of Project
Maine Families

evaluation

of nine

comprehensive

community-based

child

abuse

and neglect

prevention

programs

October 1996

Contract No. 105-92-1808

Prepared for:

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Administration for Children and Families
Administration on Children, Youth and Families
National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect
330 C Street, S.W.
Washington, DC 20201

Prepared by:

CSR, Incorporated
Suite 200
1400 Eye Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20005

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE	iii
OVERVIEW OF MAINE	1
CUMBERLAND AND FRANKLIN COUNTIES, MAINE	2
GRANTEE ORGANIZATION: CUMBERLAND COUNTY CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT COUNCIL	3
PROGRAM DESIGN	3
Planning Groups	3
Parent Focus Groups	4
Project Maine Families Staff	5
Project Maine Families Interventions	6
<i>Prevention Programming Through Community Events</i>	6
<i>Cumberland County Interventions</i>	7
<i>Jack Elementary School Family Center</i>	7
<i>Media Campaign</i>	7
<i>Portland Public Library Series</i>	7
<i>DHS Teen Parent Day Care and Support Program</i>	7
<i>Support Our Adolescent Parents (Project SOAP)</i>	8
<i>Parents' Recess</i>	8
<i>Home-Based Parent Educator in Sagamore Village Housing Project</i>	9
<i>Franklin County Interventions</i>	9
<i>Parent to Parent</i>	9
<i>Parent Cooperatives</i>	9
<i>Parent Resource Centers</i>	10
<i>Strong Stories</i>	10
<i>Making Memories</i>	10
<i>Western Maine Community Action Program Collaboration</i>	10
PROGRAM EVALUATION	11
Findings	11
SFC Events	II
<i>Cumberland County interventions</i>	II
<i>Jack Elementary School Family Center</i>	11
<i>DHS Teen Parent Day Care and Support Program</i>	12
<i>Project SOAP</i>	12
<i>Parents' Recess</i>	13
<i>Franklin County Interventions</i>	13
<i>Parent to Parent</i>	13
<i>Parent Cooperatives</i>	14
<i>FCCTF Functioning</i>	15
Additional Factors Affecting Project Maine Families	15
INSTITUTIONALIZATION	17
CONCLUSION	17

P R E F A C E

The National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect (NCCAN) funded nine comprehensive **community**-based child abuse and neglect prevention projects in 1989. Through this **5-year** grant program, NCCAN encouraged community groups, ranging from community-based organizations and child welfare agencies to universities and hospitals, to join together with other community forces to prevent physical child abuse and neglect. NCCAN underscored the intent that the projects were to be both community based and comprehensive—that they should network with and encourage the involvement of many community service providers.

The nine prevention projects represented diverse target communities, emphasized different objectives and approaches, and implemented different interventions in response to the NCCAN initiative. In choosing to fund such diverse projects, NCCAN sought to assess the effects of the different approaches based on the geographic, ethnic, demographic, and economic context of each community. The projects' approaches to preventing child abuse and neglect also reflected factors such as the philosophy of the project's architect, the project's history in the community, and requirements of other sources of funding. Thus, this grant program provided a singular opportunity for NCCAN and the prevention field to learn the strategies that worked best to focus community resources on preventing child maltreatment and the types of communities in which they worked best.

CSR, Incorporated, conducted a national evaluation of the nine prevention projects to document their experiences and contribute to an understanding of ways to mediate risk factors and strengthen families through solid partnerships with their

communities. The evaluation included a series of in-depth site visits to each of the nine projects; analyses of project progress, evaluation, and final reports; and analyses of process and outcome data collected by the projects. In addition, information was obtained through meetings and conversations with project staff and through project publications such as manuals, newsletters, and program logs. Results of the evaluation are reported in the following:

- A set of nine case studies that reflect the uniqueness of each project and the complexity of their individual experiences;
- A cross-site analysis of the experiences of the nine projects, incorporating data collected by both CSR and the projects and presenting policy recommendations derived from **CSR's** findings;
- A "lessons learned" report discussing the most important findings and experiences of the projects.

The information presented in these case studies and reports' is intended to contribute to the effectiveness of prevention programs by highlighting how these nine communities established comprehensive projects for strengthening families and focusing community resources on preventing child maltreatment and by providing an understanding of what worked in those communities and why. As the prevention field increasingly recognizes that comprehensive and communitywide efforts are required to respond to the urgent problems that lead to child maltreatment, the experience of projects such as these will provide valuable lessons on which to build in policy and program development.

¹ Note that these case studies and reports primarily cover the base period of the NCCAN demonstration grant, which was 1989 through 1994.

PROJECT MAINE FAMILIES

This report describes Project Maine Families, one of nine demonstration projects funded by the National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect (NCCAN) to develop models of community-based, collaborative programs to effectively prevent child maltreatment. Project Maine Families is the result of a unique collaboration between two separate county organizations, the Cumberland County (Maine) Child Abuse and Neglect Council (CCCANC), which spearheaded the effort, and the Franklin County (Maine) Children's Task Force (FCCTF). In addition, a variety of other local community, school, and service organizations banded with the two county organizations to identify and address the needs of children and their families in an attempt to combat the family and community factors that result in the abuse and neglect of children.

In urban Cumberland County, the project implemented a school family center, a media program, a public library discussion series, a teenage parent day care and support center, a drop-in laundry program, a parents' speaker and support group, and a parent education program in a low-income housing development. In rural Franklin County, the project implemented a summer reading program, a resource directory, a parent education program for Head Start-eligible families, parent cooperative support and education groups, and a parent mentoring and home visitation program. In both counties, the project sponsored community events to reduce the isolation of families and to encourage a sense of support and togetherness.

OVERVIEW OF MAINE

One of the first tasks undertaken by Project Maine Families was to establish the degree of need for child abuse and neglect prevention interventions. According to the grantee, CCCANC, the State of Maine exhibited several factors that have been associated with child abuse and neglect, including high rates of poverty, unemployment, teenage pregnancy, alcoholism, and teenage suicide.

Compounding these problems was the fact that many families in Maine live in remote locations, leading to feelings of isolation and a lack of community support, both of which contribute to families' stress levels. Even Portland, which by Maine standards is a large city (it has a population of 65,000), is small in relation to other urban areas across the United States. This combination of factors often results in fewer support services, employment possibilities, housing choices, and affordable family entertainment options, especially for single or teenage parents.

Maine has a history of using collaborative efforts to combat its most serious problems. Previous prevention efforts by local child abuse and neglect councils, volunteers, social service professionals, and businesses resulted in formal and informal alliances. These efforts included the establishment of a Children's Trust Fund in 1985, the development of an adolescent peer support network, the establishment of an Adolescent Pregnancy Coalition, the involvement of business and industry, and the establishment of the Maine Prevention Network.

These efforts, however, did not result in a decrease in the number of child abuse and neglect cases for the State of Maine. In 1989, as noted by the grantee in the initial grant application, child abuse rates in Maine appeared to be on the rise, with a 9-percent increase in reported cases.

The creators of Project Maine Families believed that previous efforts were not comprehensive in terms of their community interventions, did not always directly relate to clients' needs, and were not always able to persuade large and small local businesses and service organizations to work as a cohesive unit to maximize child abuse and neglect prevention efforts, as discussed in the initial grant application. They believed that Cumberland and Franklin Counties needed an innovative program providing a comprehensive set of services that were appropriate and relevant to these two distinct counties.

The founders of Project Maine Families also believed that social marketing strategies such as community surveys and focus groups could help define effective approaches for the prevention initiatives. Therefore, an early activity of Project Maine Families was to conduct interviews with knowledgeable and influential community members, prevention experts, and school officials. This provided Project Maine Families with local area demographic data, a list of available services, and other vital information that was used in developing program plans. Each county also conducted a series of focus group discussions with parents, during which parents were asked about their experiences as parents; how their experiences compared with those of their own parents; the problems they had raising their children; and what, if any, support services might help them feel their parenting was successful. These data were compiled with the key informant, demographic, and other data previously collected to determine the ultimate direction Project Maine Families programs would take.

Finally, Project Maine Families staff 'were united in their belief that although the name recognition of the CCCANC was important in securing funding and eliciting support from local and State organizations, it was important for the program participants-and, therefore, vital to the success of the program-to make a distinction between CCCANC and Project Maine Families, so that the participants did not perceive themselves as connected with a "child abuse and neglect" program.

CUMBERLAND AND FRANKLIN COUNTIES, MAINE

During the demonstration period, Cumberland County, which is the most urban county in the State of Maine and includes the city of Portland, had a population of approximately 200,000. The population was 90 percent white, although Portland also was home to an increasing number of Southeast Asian, African, and Central American immigrants. Thirteen percent of families in Cumberland County lived below the poverty level;

thus, 7,438 families with 1,770 children under age 5 lived in poverty. CCCANC reported in its grant application that increases in housing costs, the predominance of low-paying or seasonal jobs, and the particular problems of immigrants, including lack of community integration, all led to an increase in residents dependent on welfare and experiencing a high number of risk factors for child abuse and other problematic behaviors.

Child abuse and neglect reports in Cumberland County also had been rising. CCCANC reported in its initial grant application that in 1988 an average of 27.6 reports of physical abuse per month were logged by the Department of Human Services, compared with an average of 30 cases a month logged during the first 5 months of 1989. Throughout the late 1980s and early 1990s, rates of school dropout, truancy, and teenage pregnancy, all known risk factors, also continued to rise.

Rural Franklin County is geographically isolated in the western foothills of the White Mountains. With a population of 30,000, Franklin County's poverty level during the demonstration period was nearly 20 percent of all families. In addition, community resources were limited; no public transportation was available, only one hospital with approximately 80 beds was in operation, and few if any mental health services existed. The rural nature of Franklin County also contributed to the families' sense of physical and social isolation from other members of the community. The feeling of isolation often was exacerbated in new or teenage mothers, whose community ties were most fragile.

GRANTEE ORGANIZATION: CUMBERLAND COUNTY CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT COUNCIL

The CCCANC, the grantee organization for Project Maine Families, was established in 1976 as the first of 16 child abuse and neglect councils in Maine (one was established in each county). CCCANC was responsible for overseeing all aspects of the project and for implementing programming in Cumberland County. It focused

on training and education, advocacy, and public policy concerning child abuse and neglect. Prior to the awarding of the NCCAN grant, CCCANC had accomplished the following:

- Conducted a 1987 study documenting the rise of teen homelessness in Portland;
- Participated in community forums emphasizing the development of family support programs;
- Participated in an assessment of how to bring child abuse prevention programs to the increasing Asian refugee population;
- Coordinated efforts to introduce legislation to increase funding for children's services;
- Conducted public awareness campaigns;
- Provided consultation to businesses about ways they could participate in child abuse prevention activities; and
- Conducted extensive training of teachers, including a 10-week teachers' recertification course on child abuse.

CCCANC's collaborator in Project Maine Families, the FCCTF, was incorporated in 1978 as a private, nonprofit corporation. A grassroots organization, the FCCTF was responsible for prevention activities in Franklin County. Prior to the awarding of the NCCAN grant, the FCCTF had provided parent education and support groups, in-service training on child abuse and neglect reporting and prevention, and other community programs.

PROGRAM DESIGN

The philosophy of Project Maine Families emphasized that "it takes a community to raise a child" (Project Maine Families, 1994a). At the onset of the demonstration grant period, Project Maine Families believed that inadequacies in the social service system had to be addressed and

communities had to be refocused on families to reduce the incidence of child abuse **and** neglect. The inadequacies included a lack of coordination among services, a focus on the convenience of service providers rather than on clients' needs, a lack of feedback from clients, and insufficient involvement of businesses and other community members in dealing with the problem of child abuse and neglect. A Project Maine Families publication (Project Maine Families, 1994b) states the following:

The community has a vital role to play in the lives of families. It is critical that all sectors of our community begin to listen, understand and support families as they live, **work** and play. If children grow up in a community that responds kindly and compassionately, they will learn to **be** kind, compassionate adults (p. 21).

The project offered two prevention innovations for the State of Maine: (1) using the concepts of social marketing in the context of child abuse prevention and (2) involving business and industry extensively in program planning and delivery. Social marketing techniques, such as using focus groups, helped program designers learn about the expectations, desires, and lifestyles of the target client groups so that programs could be made relevant and useful to participants. **The** program also used community institutions such as shopping malls, grocery stores, and doctor's offices as vehicles for delivering its prevention messages. In addition, Project Maine Families elicited and received support for its program from major Maine companies as well as the University of Southern Maine.

Planning Groups

Project Maine Families used local child abuse **and** neglect councils as planning bodies within each community in cooperation with representatives from other social service agencies such as the YMCA (Young Men's Christian **Association**), local **libraries**, and family day care organizations; religious institutions; local schools and the University of Southern Maine; and business

leaders. This cooperative planning effort began in 1991 when CCCANC and FCCTF each organized a communitywide planning group whose functions included (1) preparing a comprehensive prevention plan, (2) developing strategies for **funding** and implementing the plan, (3) identifying and negotiating with potential sponsoring organizations, and (4) funding promising prevention programs during the planning period.

The planning group members were selected to enhance the existing resources-human, financial, and organizational-as well as to provide a base from which further community collaborative efforts could be formed. Project Maine Families was careful to include in its selection of planning group members an array of representatives from the health, business, education, and child welfare communities, as well as community leaders and parents, to establish the group as a **communitywide** resource. The strategy of bringing together members from the different sectors of the community was one of the pivotal actions of Project Maine Families 'that from the beginning, established it as a program that could and would encourage associations across boundaries that previously had not been crossed.

Although the planning groups were linked with the local sponsoring agencies (i.e., the CCCANC and the FCCTF), they were designed to operate autonomously so that they could identify and negotiate participation agreements with other program sponsors without first having, to gain approval from the sponsoring **agencies**. The stipulation that an agency board member also must be a representative on each planning group allowed for accountability, communication, and coordination of prevention efforts between the programs and the sponsoring agencies

As a first step in developing an effective child abuse prevention plan for each community, the planning groups reviewed demographic data on factors known to affect child abuse and neglect, as well as the results of structured discussions held by Project Maine Families staff with groups of parents to elicit their opinions concerning the problems,

needs, and resource requirements relating to parenting in their community. The information obtained from the focus group discussions became particularly significant in program planning and **design**.

Parent Focus Groups

Program staff believed strongly in finding out from the parents **themselves** the programs and services they needed. During December 1990 and January 1991, Cumberland and Franklin Counties each organized and conducted nine focus group discussions with parents. Focus groups were held with working parents, new parents, low-income parents, and teenage parents. The purpose of the groups was to obtain specific information about how they obtained support as parents, where or how they looked for information and assistance, what they read and what type of parenting information they might read, and how effective television and radio for transmitting information. A total of 58 parents participated in Cumberland County and 65 parents in Franklin County.

From these focus group sessions, Project Maine Families learned that parents needed better support and education, as well as affordable and adequate day care and family entertainment opportunities. Parents reported feeling isolated and overwhelmed and expressed frustration in handling the lack of respect shown for the parenting role, juggling their parental and work responsibilities, and coping with societal views of staying at home with children versus working. Project Maine Families translated the statements of need expressed during the focus group discussions into **the following** goals for all Project Maine Families programs, as presented in the final evaluation report (Davey, 1994):

- All parents should have the kind of child care that allows them to work and live in the way **they** want;
- Workplaces should **have** policies that support families;

- Communities should treat parenting as a valued activity;
- Communities should offer recreational activities oriented toward families; **and**
- All parents should have the support they need to raise happy, healthy children.

Project Maine Families' programs also had the following mediating goals:

- Increase education and community collaboration to strengthen parenting skills and support families;
- Reduce stress among teenage mothers;
- Increase the knowledge of new parents about child care and parenting techniques; and
- Ensure ease of access to support for parents.

Project Maine Families Staff

This following list describes the program staff from both counties and their responsibilities:

- *Project director.*-The project director of Project Maine Families also served as the director of the CCCANC. The project director's responsibilities included organizing and managing all project activities, supervising staff, organizing and leading the Cumberland County Prevention Work Group, and serving as chief liaison to participating Cumberland County worksites.

By the end of the NCCAN grant, the project director also had assumed the responsibilities of principal investigator. Initially, the principal investigator had been the director of the National Child Welfare Research Center at the University of Southern Maine, which was responsible for designing the process for conducting the community inventories, synthesizing the demographic and social needs data, conducting a national review of effective

preventions programs, designing the social marketing approach; developing evaluation plans, and producing the project's comprehensive plan. By the project's fourth year, the University of Southern Maine was no longer involved with Project Maine Families, and a new evaluation consultant assumed responsibility for the evaluation.

- *Cumberland County site director.*-The Cumberland County site director participated in organizing the planning effort for the county and served as a liaison to the Cumberland County worksites.
- *Cumberland County community projects coordinator.*-The community projects coordinator was responsible for initiating and facilitating collaborations that led to the development of new programs and events.
- *Franklin County Children's Task Force executive director.*-Also the former chair of the Maine Association of Child Abuse and Neglect Councils, the executive director of the FCCTF was responsible for organizing the entire planning effort for the county and serving as chief liaison to the local worksites.
- *Franklin County site director.*-The Franklin County site director participated in organizing the planning effort for the county and **served as a** liaison to the Franklin County worksites.
- *Parent cooperative coordinator (PCC).*—The principal areas of responsibility for the PCC were parent cooperative development, maintaining the cooperative network, and resource development. For the parent cooperative development, the PCC worked with parents, parent educators, other providers, and cosponsoring agencies and organizations in creating new cooperatives. The PCC provided individual supervision and support to cooperative leaders and facilitated initial group meetings.

- *Child care coordinator.*--This part-time position ensured that appropriate child care was available at all classes, meetings, or other events involving parents.
- *Contractors.*—In both Cumberland and Franklin Counties, contractors were responsible for various parent education and parent support programs.

Project Maine Families Interventions

A major focus of Project Maine Families in both counties was the community event programming. These events involved bringing together schools, families, and community organizations and members to plan and implement family events. Other Project Maine Families interventions were implemented only in Franklin or Cumberland County, responding to each county's unique needs and resources. Project Maine Families required that any program or activity with which it was involved must offer free child care, transportation, and refreshments as a way of demonstrating its sensitivity to the needs of parents and families in its communities.

Each activity undertaken by Project Maine Families involved community collaboration and linkages. Thus, discussion of the project's collaboration and networking with other agencies and organizations is woven throughout this section, rather than appearing in a separate section.

Prevention Programming Through Community Events

In parent focus group discussions, parents commented on the need for affordable family entertainment options as a way to build community spirit and participate in an enjoyable activity with their children. The focus groups also noted that parental stress was increased when parents had to choose between attending events at all or selecting which children could go to an event based on the costs associated with it (Project Maine Families, 1994c). The School/Family/Community (SFC) events were a response to the parents' comments as well as to discussions with community members.

The communities that participated in SFC events **ranged** from extremely remote and rural to the **second** largest urban area in Cumberland County. Having unique needs and resources, each developed different types of community events. For example, some events featured a dinner or a community fair, while others highlighted a talent show or musician. To ensure that the events remained affordable, all offered free admission and food to eliminate any financial barriers that might affect attendance.

The SFC events served as a catalyst to involve different segments of the community in family-oriented activities. With the assistance of a Project Maine Families staff member to plan and design the events, community members from a cross-section of the population were recruited to donate their time and talents in planning and executing the events, and businesses such as the Jaycees and the Lions Club were encouraged to act as sponsors and donate food, supplies, and labor to distribute the overall financial responsibilities and create a sense of ownership for these events. Each community met with different results in terms of responses to these requests, but most communities did receive contributions in the form of gift certificates, food, supplies, tables, chairs, and volunteer time. In communities where there were fewer resources, Project Maine Families provided additional support with project funds.

Project Maine Families determined that the most efficient way to promote and implement communitywide family-oriented events was to build relationships with schools that were committed to collaboration **and** to supporting families. Working through the schools, five communities across the two counties began the process by organizing planning groups (separate and distinct from the county-level planning groups). Members of the planning groups were recruited through a variety of sources, including schools, Parent-Teacher Associations, service organizations, churches, and word of mouth. Technical assistance was provided to the planning groups by a Project Maine Families staff member

who attended the meetings and supported the planning groups to ensure successful events.

Cumberland County Interventions

Over the 5-year grant period, Project Maine Families implemented the Jack Elementary School Family Center, a media campaign, the Portland Public Library Series, **Deering** High School (DHS) Teen Parent Day Care and Support program, Support Our Adolescent Parents (Project SOAP), Parents' Recess, and Home-Based Parent Educator in Sagamore Village Housing Project.

Jack Elementary School Family Center

The goal of the Family Center at Jack Elementary School, located in the Munjoy Hill neighborhood of Portland, was to provide the families of Jack Elementary students with a physical place within the school dedicated to making them feel welcome and a part of the school community, where they could share common concerns and questions; obtain information about child development, parenting, and school policy; and give and receive peer support. The Munjoy Hill neighborhood is one of the oldest blue-collar neighborhoods in the city, where a large number of families live below the poverty level. At the time of the NCCAN grant, more than 90 percent of the children enrolled at Jack were eligible for free or **reduced-price** school lunches. Participants, therefore, were lower income parents, the majority of whom were not working outside the home, and many were headed by single females.

Activities sponsored by the Family Center included a Friday Morning Craft Group, a Clothes Closet, new parent welcoming, a multicultural support group, a sewing circle, and positive attitude awards for children. Parent support, exercise classes, GED (general equivalency diploma) classes, and other skillbuilding activities also were offered. The Family Center distributed a **monthly** newsletter to inform families about upcoming activities, available services, and information on how to become a parent volunteer.

Media Campaign

Project Maine Families initiated a media campaign designed to convey information about parenting and to publicize the programs available for helping parents with their parenting efforts. Program staff used information from the parent focus groups to design the media campaign; parent focus groups provided information on where and how parents looked for information and assistance, what they read and what type of parenting information they might read, and how effective television and radio were as ways to transmit information.

The media campaign included articles in local newspapers, flyers distributed throughout the community, and newsletters. In addition, Maine Public Radio aired a g-minute radio feature in April 1992, outlining the program and interviewing participants from the parent cooperatives in Franklin County and Project SOAP in Cumberland County. In addition, the CCCANC newsletter Needs and Dreams consistently gave prime print space to increase public awareness of parenting issues and Project Maine Families activities.

Portland Public Library Series

The public library series, which began in the summer of 1991, consisted of a variety of structured discussions on childraising and parental concerns geared specifically toward working parents in Portland. According to the final quarterly report to NCCAN, this program spurred a collaboration among rural county libraries to sponsor similar family support programs within their facilities.

DHS Teen Parent Day Care and Support Program

This program initiative, which began in January 1992, targeted teenage parents in Cumberland County. Participants were students of Portland's DHS. The program was devised to assist teenage parents in their academic and vocational pursuits by providing free child care, arranging flexible school schedules, awarding school credits for attending the parenting classes

and in exchange for working in the day care homes, and facilitating an in-school support group. Project Maine Families also contracted with a local taxi cab company to provide transportation between the teenagers' homes and their day care locations.

This initiative was actively supported by some school personnel and the community at-large from its inception. The DHS school nurse and social worker facilitated the support group and made referrals. The home economics teacher was the principal contact for the teenage parents and taught the parenting class. Project Maine Families provided ongoing support to teenage mothers, school staff, and day care providers. The school administration and staff responded to the program by initiating curriculum changes which directly benefitted teenage parent students. In total, 11 students were referred to this program, and 8 actually participated during the period of NCCAN funding.

Support Our Adolescent Parents (Project SOAP)

In the focus groups with teenage parents, the teenagers made it clear that they had chosen to become parents but needed considerable support. These young women described how they tried to be good parents but encountered hostility from the community and were able to find few financial and emotional resources. Many lived in apartments without telephones, isolated from peers and burdened with significant financial problems.

One of the major stressors identified by teenage mothers was laundry. Project SOAP, located in Portland, was a drop-in laundry program where teenage mothers were brought together every other week for mutual support, through the offer of free transportation, lunch, child care, and laundry facilities. Project SOAP services were available to all young parents in the community. Project Maine Families brought together the YWCA (Young Women's Christian Association) (for child care), the Regional Transportation Program (for busing), and Pratt-Abbott, Inc. (for laundry service), to contribute their resources to this program. The

program was a notable example of community collaboration that addressed the specific needs of a high-risk and vulnerable population.

The first week that Project SOAP was in operation it served seven mothers; within a month, the number had tripled, and throughout the course of the program, increasing numbers of teenage mothers were interested in Project SOAP. Ultimately, more than 138 parents had contact with the program and, at any given time, approximately 30 teenage mothers participated. The program's success revealed the depth of the community's need and subsequently caused some strain among staff members in terms of meeting the demand for services with no corresponding increase in resources.

Although assisting mothers in doing their laundry was the primary program goal, other benefits included the opportunity for program staff to develop trusting relationships with the mothers and to provide them with accurate information about parenting and child development. Project SOAP was a key program in engaging teenage parents who were not accessing other service programs. Many mothers were not known to other service providers, while some had participated in other services.

Parents' Recess

The Parent's Recess Program, begun in September 1992, offered ongoing parent support in the Standish/Steep Falls area, a very rural area in the western part of Cumberland County. This program targeted parents who stayed at home and were isolated from their communities because their children were not yet of school age. Each week there were guest speakers, free child care and refreshments, and open discussions and interactions with other attendees. Parent's Recess offered an opportunity for parents to break geographic and emotional isolation. In sponsoring the Parents' Recess Program, Project Maine Families collaborated with the Standish Congregational Church, which provided space. Flyers and notices were distributed through elementary schools,

church bulletins, businesses, and pediatricians' offices; the program also was advertised in the local television and print media. Because of the interest in this program, it was replicated in an urban setting (Portland) in Parents' Recess on the Hill, for parents living in Munjoy Hill, the area served by Jack Elementary School. An average of approximately 20 parents participated in each Parents' Recess program, and approximately 15 participated in Parents' Recess on the Hill.

Home-Based Parent Educator in Sagamore Village Housing Project

In an effort to respond to allegations of sexual offenses between children in the Sagamore Village Housing Project, Project Maine Families funded a parent educator to work with the parents and children in 1994. (Although the sexual offenses occurred between children, the children's parents said that they could handle the problem if they received parenting education and support.)

This program provided parent education through home visits by a parent educator who was a social worker to distrustful parents who would not attend traditional groups. The goal of the program was to foster parenting and communication skills and to encourage these parents to join a parent support group of their peers. In January 1994 the Portland Housing Authority took over responsibility for the continued funding of this parent educator position.

Franklin County Interventions

Over the **5-year** grant period, Project Maine Families implemented Parent to Parent, parent cooperatives, Parent Resource Centers, Strong Stories, Making Memories, and Western Maine Community Action Program Collaboration.

Parent to Parent

The purpose of the Parent to Parent program, which began in January 1993, was to provide information and support to ease the transition into parenthood for first-time parents by linking them with experienced parent volunteers as well as to

help parents access community resources and obtain parenting education and services. New mothers giving birth at Franklin Memorial Hospital and living within a 30-mile radius of the hospital or giving birth at home within the same approximate geographic boundaries were eligible for the Parent to Parent program.

Approximately one-third of the participants were teenage mothers, and about one-half were single parents. The match between the mentor and the mother ideally was made during the mother's pregnancy. The program referrals came from two main sources-doctor's offices and hospital social workers. After a mother expressed interest in the program, the project director made a home visit, bringing informational materials for the expectant mother. On the second home visit, the project director brought a volunteer mentor, as well as an assortment of appropriate books and videotapes.

Training for the home visitors/mentors covered interpersonal skills and neonatal and perinatal information. By the end of 1993, Project Maine Families had incorporated male mentors and mentoring couples into the program, in an effort to increase male involvement. During the 4 years the program was funded through the NCCAN grant, there were approximately 80 participants, with slightly fewer mentors. Parent to Parent still operates and is being incorporated as part of the Healthy Families America program in Franklin County.

Parent Cooperatives

Project Maine Families sponsored several parent cooperatives over the grant period. These cooperatives were self-defined and **self-**administered groups of parents who banded together around issues of shared interest or concern. The groups met regularly to exchange information and provide mutual support and were open to everyone. Cooperative activities also included nutrition and stress management classes and informal social activities. The FCCTF provided consultation and resources to support the groups. Some cooperatives developed from the

FCCTF's own parent education programs, and some developed from day care or school departments. In other instances, cooperatives were formed spontaneously by parents who discovered common needs. A total of approximately 250 parents participated in the parent cooperatives, which ceased operating when Project Maine Families ended its support because of insufficient staff time for organizing the cooperatives. The following are examples of the types of cooperatives that formed:

- Single Parent Co-Op (Farmington);
- Self-Esteem Co-Op (Farmington);
- Parents Supporting Parents of Children with Special Emotional and Behavioral Needs (Farmington);
- Parents of Asthmatic Children (Farmington);
- Parents of Kids With Seizures (Farmington);
- Parents of Teens (Farmington);
- Parents of Sexually Abused Children (Farmington), facilitated by a professional staff member of the FCCTF;
- Supporting Parents With Exceptional Children (Jay);
- Phillips Preschool Co-Op;
- Parents of Teens (Phillips);
- Rangely Parents;
- Stratton Parent Co-Op;
- Wilton Prekindergarten Co-Op; and
- Wilton Young Child Play Group.

Parent Resource Centers

The purpose of the Parent Resource Centers was to provide a place where parents could find parenting information and support in a convenient, accessible location. One center was established at the FCCTF office and was operated by FCCTF, while the other centers were established and operated by parents themselves, with the support and assistance of Project Maine Families. Four centers were established and still operate.

Strong Stories

This summer program was a collaboration between Project Maine Families and Strong Elementary School. Project Maine Families provided financial support and technical assistance to the school to implement the program. During its first summer, when Project Maine Families was involved, it served about 30 children in the area surrounding the school. The program focused on the importance of reading to preschool and elementary school children and provided developmentally appropriate lessons in social skills. The parents were invited to join the cooperatives and parent education classes sponsored by Project Maine Families.

Making Memories

The Making Memories booklet listed communitywide programs and activities within Franklin County that were child and family oriented. Project Maine Families revised and updated the booklet in 1991 and 1993 and printed a total of 8,000 copies. Public libraries were the main vehicle for disseminating this resource, although a media campaign also was launched to increase circulation and community awareness of the document, and copies were placed in physicians' waiting rooms and distributed through area Chambers of Commerce.

Western Maine Community Action Program Collaboration

Beginning in October 1991, an initiative to address parenting needs of Head Start-eligible families with

children from birth to age 3 was established through a cooperative effort between Project Maine Families and the Administration on Children, Youth and Families. This initiative resulted in subcontracts with Project Maine Families and the FCCTF to provide technical assistance and program support through the local Head Start Parent-Child Center. Project Maine Families staff led the parenting workshops, which covered child development topics, discipline, and communication skills. Approximately 27 parents were involved during each of the 3 years Project Maine Families provided the workshops. This initiative is ongoing, although Project Maine Families is no longer involved.

PROGRAM EVALUATION

Evaluation of the program interventions implemented by Project **Maine Families** was directed by the National Child Welfare Resource Center at the University of Southern Maine, although staff in Cumberland and Franklin Counties occasionally were called on to collect information for the evaluation. The evaluation was designed to assess interventions in each location and discuss common themes or elements across the interventions, but the data collection and analysis were done separately for the two counties. Evaluation results for the Cumberland County interventions were reported in Davey (1994), and those for Franklin County were reported in Anzovino (1994).

Findings

The Project Maine Families evaluation consisted primarily of a qualitative assessment of the reactions of program participants and leaders, obtained through postprogram questionnaires and focus group discussions. Collateral interviews with community collaborators and service providers elicited information about how collaboration with Project Maine Families influenced their beliefs and behaviors regarding child abuse and what factors influenced their decision to collaborate. Program staff recorded process information about the

number of events, number of persons who participated, and age of participants. Changes in behaviors and attitudes related to child abuse and neglect were not directly assessed.

The collateral interviews were conducted with 47 **administrators** and other staff (primarily female) who were employed in community agencies, public schools, and day care facilities. The interviews revealed that because of their involvement with Project Maine Families, a large majority of interviewees (87 percent) had experienced behavioral changes and an increased awareness of child abuse and neglect. Many interviewees specifically indicated an increased awareness that “prevention is a community concern, not just a DHS concern.” More than one-third responded that they had begun to involve the community in planning activities and events.

SFC Events

The evaluation found some evidence of effectiveness in the SFC events. The number and level of participation in events increased throughout the grant period. Eventually, five communities were recruited to collaborate with Project Maine Families in sponsoring events, and the volunteer event planners were generally successful in obtaining the desired level of community support. In addition, each event was publicized in some manner (ranging from flyers to school notices) that met the overall objective of increasing the public’s awareness about positive parenting and family support.

Cumberland County Interventions

In Cumberland County, Project Maine Families evaluated the Jack Elementary School Family Center, DHS Teen Parent Day Care and Support program, Project SOAP, and Parents’ Recess.

Jack Elementary School Family Center

The Jack Elementary School Family Center initiative began slowly; the parent coordinator gradually discovered the activities that would

attract parents to the school and to the center itself. Activities such as hayrides and egg coloring were designed to help parents see the school as a friendly, welcoming place for families. An important factor in the success of the center was the strong relationship between Project Maine Families and school administration. According to the final evaluation report, the center was able to overcome the parents' negative perceptions and eventually came to be seen as a valuable community resource for families and a partner in the development and education of their children.

Qualitative indicators were considered indicative of the center's success. For example, the principal at the school reported that she noticed what she considered to be a positive change in the students who had been involved in the center; the students waved at her and made more eye contact with her and with teachers.

DHS Teen Parent Day Care and Support Program

The DHS Teen Parent Day Care and Support program began in 1992 with the purpose of assisting teen mothers to remain in school by providing day care and transportation assistance, altering their school schedules to meet their unique requirements, and providing them with the emotional support and parenting education they needed to stay in school. In total, 11 teenage parents were referred to this program, all of whom originated from the school, and 8 actually participated. The program found that the teenagers' success or failure was strongly influenced by the degree of family support each had prior to beginning the program. For two participants, the break from full-time parenting provided by the program was important in helping to stabilize their lives.

This program was the result of a collaboration between Project Maine Families and DHS. The support from the school administration was generally lukewarm, although not hostile, as the school administration was concerned about devoting too many resources to teenage parents. However, the program enjoyed strong support from

other school personnel, including the school nurse, the social worker, and the instructor of the parenting class. Thus, the degree of support from the administrators strongly influenced the institutionalization of the program. The program's success (as measured by the number of referrals) was contingent on the active participation of the school nurse, social worker, and the instructor of the parenting class.

Project SOAP

Project SOAP participants exhibited many of the high-risk factors known to be associated with child abuse and neglect. Most Project SOAP participants reported that their incomes were not adequate to cover their basic living expenses, they used public transportation to get to the program, they had one or two children, they lived either alone (35 percent) or with a boyfriend (31 percent) rather than with parents or husbands, and they had moved an average of eight times in the last 5 years.

The success of this initiative was indicated by the participants' consistent attendance and high level of interest, as well as the effective implementation of unique and effective collaborations that addressed the specific needs of this high-risk and vulnerable population. Using the YWCA as a dropoff point allowed the teenagers to use the services of that organization, including a clothes swap, that they might not otherwise have used. In addition, the teenagers used the Project SOAP experience to network and share information regarding other support services. Before participating in Project SOAP, many of these mothers had not used the services that were available to them, but their experience with Project SOAP encouraged them to connect with services to obtain needed resource?; and parenting help.

Finally, the evaluation noted that an added benefit of this program was the effect on the children of the teenage parents. The day care experience often was the first exposure these children had to a formalized social structure. Their social skills, as reported by YWCA day care providers, improved

dramatically through the experience of playing with the other children.

Parents' Recess

Parents' Recess was developed specifically as ongoing support to combat the isolation of parents with children who were not yet of school age. The local planning group chose the initial topics and speakers and then surveyed participants to discern what interests they had for the future direction of the program. Involving the parents in choosing program activities proved to be critical to the program's success; the parents appreciated the opportunity to influence the direction of the program, and the number of parents attending the program activities continually increased throughout the grant period. One sign of success was that Project Maine Families responded to parent requests and established a similar program called Parents' Recess on the Hill for parents in the Munjoy Hill area of Portland.

The evaluation consisted of postprogram questionnaires administered to 13 participants. The 13 participants were those who were willing to be interviewed. An average of 20 parents attended each Parents' Recess, but no count was kept of the overall number of participants. The participants were primarily women with at least some college education, in their mid to late 30s, who once had worked full time but were working part time or not at all after having children. (This group does not fit the usual definition of "high risk." It is not known how representative the group was of all Project Maine Families participants.)

These women, who had good educations and significant work experience, reported that they rarely had a chance to go out without their children, and they were having difficulty feeling connected to the community. The women's responses to the questionnaires indicated that this initiative was successful in meeting the Project Maine **Families objective of reducing parental stress** that could lead to abuse or neglect of their children, while also providing support services that they deemed necessary and important to parents. The popularity of this program, as well as the

parents' comments about the need for and usefulness of this type of forum, demonstrated the effectiveness of Project Maine Families in meeting its own goals and objectives.

Franklin County Interventions

The Project Maine Families' evaluation covered the two major prevention program activities—the Parent to Parent program and parent cooperatives. In addition, the evaluation measured the effectiveness of the FCCTF itself in meeting its goals and objectives and obtained data on the degree of empowerment of FCCTF program providers and participants, as measured by the Family Empowerment Scale.

Parent to Parent

The evaluation of the Parent to Parent program included a volunteer questionnaire and telephone interviews with program volunteers, participants, and nonparticipants. The 30 volunteer questionnaires revealed that three-fourths of the volunteers believed the program was effective in its training component, and the volunteers were able to accurately state the goals and objectives of the program. In addition, the results showed that the volunteers rated the program as being successful in providing needed services to the community. The volunteers generally gave favorable ratings to the support materials Project Maine Families supplied to prepare and assist them in their mentoring duties, although the Resource Library appeared to have been underutilized, as specifically mentioned by a quarter of respondents. The volunteers reported that most of the volunteers did achieve the program's goals of providing material, educational, and moral support to new parents; in addition, most of them referred the parents to parenting classes, although they infrequently connected parents with other agencies. These results were confirmed through telephone surveys with the volunteers; most volunteers stated that their experiences were consistent with their perceptions of the Parent to Parent goals and that they had been well trained by the FCCTF staff.

The participant telephone survey (14 participants completed questionnaires out of 22 attempted) found that doctor referrals were the primary method used to connect these new parents with the program. Participants generally appreciated the program. The personal changes reported most frequently were increased confidence and security in their parenting (5 participants) and increased knowledge about parenting (4 participants); other reported benefits of program participation included parenting becoming easier and less awkward, gaining a different perspective, and serving as a stress reliever. Three participants felt they had not personally changed as a result of their program participation.

Finally, a nonparticipant telephone survey (17 participants completed questionnaires out of 35 attempted) revealed that the nonparticipants had learned about the program most often through doctor referrals. The most frequently cited reason for nonparticipation in the program was having other means of parent support (16 nonparticipants); if these other support mechanisms **had** been unavailable, or if the nonparticipants had lived closer to the program activities or had more time, they reported that they would have become involved in the Parent to Parent program.

The evaluation report concluded that **the** Parent to Parent program was effective for both participants and volunteers and met a need for parenting support. However, the evaluation report also pointed out that the Parent to Parent **program** predominately involved women as both participants and volunteers, as did most of the **Project** Maine Families programs, and suggested that more men needed to become involved. Project Maine Families Committee members were aware that the primary participants in the program were mothers and that all volunteers were mothers or grandmothers; the committee also discussed ways in which men could be more involved in the program as both volunteers and participants. Some suggestions to improve male involvement were to include men in recruitment efforts (for both volunteers and participants); offer first-time families a choice of male or female mentors as part

of the orientation and introduction process; **market the** Parent to Parent program as a universal service, open to all new parents; and design marketing strategies to include men and two-parent families. Project Maine Families was successful in increasing male involvement in the prevention program; by December 1993, the project staff had incorporated male mentors into the Parent to Parent program and added some mentoring couples.

Parent Cooperatives

The evaluation of the parent cooperatives focused on the perceptions of the cooperative leaders **and a** selected group of participants. Results of the eight leader interviews revealed that they became involved in leading the groups because they recognized the unmet need for parenting support and education. Many were recruited by the FCCTF, and all noted that the training, advertising, and staff technical assistance they received from the FCCTF was useful and that FCCTF staff were generally supportive and accessible.

The 24 program participants who were interviewed reported that they most frequently learned about the parent cooperatives through their children's schools but that they also had discovered the programs through other media and word of mouth. These parents commented that the parent cooperatives provided opportunities for socialization and networking, supported parenting efforts, and facilitated sharing with others who had similar problems. The most frequently mentioned effects of participation were improved relationships among family members (42 percent) and learning alternative parenting strategies (29 percent). Stress reduction, socialization and networking, and improved relationships of individuals with other members of their family also were reported as family effects.

The evaluation found that the parent cooperatives were effective in meeting their stated goals and objectives. The FCCTF was shown to be responsive to the cooperative leaders, and the level of interest in sustaining these initiatives was high. However, the evaluation report concluded **that the**

support and training provided by the FCCTF centered on content rather than process issues, and the training needed to include more material on the process of operating the cooperatives. The report also concluded that the staff needed to address the recruitment of new leaders and enhancement of parents' ability to recognize their leadership potential.

Project Maine Families found that the parent cooperatives were a highly labor-intensive intervention, with perhaps less payoff than some of the other interventions. As resources and staff time dwindled, the parent cooperatives became a lower priority until, eventually, they ceased altogether.

FCCTF Functioning

In May 1994 an assessment questionnaire was sent to 160 staff members of **school** or community agencies to obtain their opinions of how well FCCTF functioned. Thirty-four responses were recorded; all respondents had participated in, volunteered time for, or made referrals to FCCTF programs. The results indicated that respondents perceived the following as the task force's goals: to educate parents and community, to prevent child abuse, and to support families and children. Most (94 percent) believed that the FCCTF provided needed services to the community. Respondents reported needed improvements that included the addition of new and more frequent programs, rather than improvements to existing programs. When asked to rate the two Project Maine Families programs in Franklin County (Parent to Parent and parent cooperatives), the respondents rated the programs as having a satisfaction rating of 4.2 out of 5.0.

In addition, at the end of the 1993-94 service year, the program collected data measuring the degree of empowerment of program providers and participants using the Family Empowerment **Scale**. Analyses of the data showed that both providers and participants had relatively high mean scores on the Family and Service System subscales, which the evaluator interpreted as indicating that both

groups felt empowered in family and service system areas. No significant difference was found between the mean scores for the two groups. However, the mean scores for the Community/Political **subscale** were considerably lower, and there was a statistically significant difference between the providers' and the participants' mean scores, suggesting that the participants did not feel empowered to advocate for children in the community and political arenas, outside their immediate families.

Additional Factors Affecting Project Maine Families

The evaluation report and comments from the Project Maine Families staff indicated that several factors hindered the implementation of Project Maine Families:

- The programs in the two counties were operated separately, without regular contact between the two staffs. Without **full** communication, each site had to discover for itself the most efficient way of operating and problemsolving.
- The Workgroup for the Jack Elementary School Family Center struggled with issues of autonomy for the school, role clarification for the center coordinator and the project's staff (i.e., site director **and** community projects coordinator), decisionmaking processes that were responsive to parents, and the degree of parent involvement in program planning.
- Project SOAP was costly to operate. Finding funding for transportation for the mothers and for the expansion of the program was difficult.
- The vast, rural nature of Franklin County and the western half of Cumberland County presented a challenge to the program's designers because they wanted programs that would be far reaching, effective, and practical at the same time. Under these conditions, the programs evolved rapidly in response to participant needs and community resources and responses.

- Transportation for the mothers participating in the DHS Teen Parent Day Care and Support program was a major problem. For the mothers to get their babies to day care and then to get to school by 8:00 a.m. proved to be difficult. The project spent a lot of money for taxi services because without viable transportation, the mothers were likely to drop out of school. The school was unable to come up with a less costly solution because the school administration adhered to transportation arrangements provided to other students, which were unable to accommodate the needs of these mothers.
- All communities cited barriers to community togetherness. For some, the barriers were geographic; for others, barriers were economic, social, or political. Organizing and planning was a continually evolving process for each community. Remembering that collaboration was an ongoing learning process helped when difficulties arose.
- In general, staff cited “institutional resistance” as a barrier to the implementation and operation of Project Maine Families. This included difficulties in working with the University of Southern Maine, which staff felt was not sensitive to Project Maine Families’ mission and to the issues in the communities, and in working with some schools (although other schools were quite cooperative and, in some cases, contacted Project Maine Families and provided excellent support).
- Available funding to pay for services and activities when donations did not cover the expenses made many of the events possible,
- Use of focus groups, which included representatives from the targeted populations, as well as the community assessment surveys, enabled Project Maine Families to incorporate new and exciting ideas into their interventions. Project SOAP was an example of an innovative program that was a direct result of a focus group conducted by program staff during the prevention program’s first year. This program provided Project Maine Families with an early “success story” that it could market as an example of the type of innovative programming available, as well as an example of effective community collaboration.
- Development of the Jack Elementary School Family Center, which continually grew and evolved to meet the needs of the community and became a vibrant part of the community and families it served. This was reflected in the continuing stream of new activities that were implemented and the new support and activity groups that developed in the center.
- Success of the parent cooperatives in Franklin County, as evidenced by the total number of cooperatives (14) formed by the end of the grant period. These programs were parent defined and parent administered and illustrated a successful linkage between the technical and resource assistance provided by Project Maine Families staff and the operational work conducted by concerned and invested parents. However, supporting the cooperatives was highly labor intensive.
- Informal networking with friends and other groups, which was especially helpful in accomplishing tasks, particularly in communities where donations from businesses and other community groups were small or nonexistent. Many volunteers were solicited by group members through existing friendships and relationships.

The following are some of the strengths of Project Maine Families:

- Commitment and experience of the program staff, who had demonstrated a sustained commitment to the prevention of child abuse in both their personal and professional lives. The strength of the staffs commitment to **child** abuse prevention was evident in its interaction with program participants and community leaders.

Finally, for many smaller agencies and organizations in the Franklin County area, affiliation and collaboration with the FCCTF and Project Maine Families provided community visibility and enabled them to offer a higher level of service and support for families than they otherwise could have provided. For example, in September 1991, New Life Children's Center, Inc. (NLCC) and Project Maine Families began co-sponsoring 6-week workshops on parenting young children, self-esteem, positive discipline, and children and divorce. The combination of NLCC's facilities, child care services, and connection with potential participants and Project Maine Families' leadership, administrative support, and skilled educators resulted in the development of needed services and support to the community.

INSTITUTIONALIZATION

The following are some of the many programs and services originally provided by Project Maine Families through the NCCAN funding that are still in place:

- SFC events still are organized primarily through schools, although some events are organized by city recreation departments.
- Sagamore Village Housing Project home visitation and parent education program has been picked up by the Portland Housing Authority, which now pays the home visitor's salary.
- Jack Elementary School now pays the salary for the coordinator who operates the family center.
- The DHS home economics teacher still works with teenage mothers to provide outreach and parenting education and support, although child care is no longer provided.
- Project SOAP participants still participate in Project Maine Families support groups, although the laundry and child care services have ceased due to lack of funding. Project

Maine Families staff are working to obtain funding that would enable the program to continue on a long-term basis. One possibility being investigated is for Project Maine Families to establish and operate a for-profit laundry business itself, to ensure access to laundry facilities for its program clients as well as to raise funds.

- Parent to Parent still operates in Franklin County and is in the process of being replicated in Cumberland County.
- Parents' Recess and Parents' Recess on the Hill still operate.

Of the activities implemented by Project Maine Families through the NCCAN funding, the most labor-intensive intervention, parent cooperatives, and the costliest of the services, child care and laundry assistance, have ceased. Project Maine Families staff are investigating ways to fund those services on a long-term basis. Relying on volunteers, community involvement and donations, and host agencies (e.g., Portland Housing Authority and Jack Elementary School) to operate many services made it possible for Project Maine Families to continue those services beyond the grant period. Project Maine Families' ongoing program development incorporates much of what was learned under the NCCAN funding, such as staying responsive to community needs by *asking* parents what they needed.

CONCLUSION

An important guiding principle of Project Maine Families was to ask *the parents* what they needed, rather than simply offering services based on what the project staff or other agency staff thought the parents needed. By asking parents what they needed in the parent focus groups, Project Maine Families learned that few parents felt that they were doing a effective parenting job, and most parents felt isolated from support and in need of information and assistance. According to Project Maine Families staff, the feeling of needing

support and the fear of being inadequate parents were common in all socioeconomic groups. 'Thus, Project Maine Families focused on providing support to *all families*.

The program changed its logo to better reflect its vision of families. The original logo showed a mother, father, and child walking into a rainbow, but the staff felt that this did not represent the 50 percent of families in Maine that were not composed of a mother, father, and child. The logo was changed to show two hands (one large and one small) reaching to each other. Staff also maintained an emphasis on asking parents what they needed, rather than simply implementing services that the staff thought were needed.

Based on Project Maine Families' experience during the past 6 years, the staff firmly believe that the solutions to the problems facing families are not complicated and that families do not need expensive or complex programs. The key elements to implementing successful support programs for families, according to Project Maine Families staff, are as follows':

Believe it will happen.

Believe everyone has a part.

Believe everyone wants to play their part.

Start where people are, and, if necessary, ask them where they are and what they need.

Require collaboration.

Eliminate barriers by providing child care, food, transportation, and free admission.

Believe that the solution is inexpensive (i.e., successful programs do not require a large outlay of funds).

Project Maine Families also emphasized involving business and industry in designing and implementing community programming. Through this involvement, Project Maine Families learned the importance of a "business-like" approach in collaborating with businesses-putting agreements in writing and developing business plans, when appropriate. Such an approach can enhance the effectiveness of collaboration.

REFERENCES

- Anzovino, S. 1994. *Franklin County Final Evaluation Report*. Farmington, ME: Franklin County Children's Task Force.
- Davey, L. 1994. *Cumberland County Child Abuse and Neglect Council's "Project Maine Families" Final Evaluation Report*. Portland, ME: Cumberland County Child Abuse and Neglect Council.
- Project Maine Families. 1994a. *A Planning Journey: Roadmap for Conducting Community Assessments*. Portland, ME: University of Southern Maine.
- Project Maine Families. 1994b. *Conducting Community Assessments: Project Maine Families Cumberland County Initiative*. Portland, ME: University of Southern Maine.
- Project Maine Families. 1994c. *Conducting Family-Focused Community Events: Project Maine Families Cumberland County Initiative*. Portland, ME: University of Southern Maine.

¹ This list was developed from overhead slides created by the project director for presentations on how to organize parent groups and community events.